

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311953727>

# H. G. WELLS: “FATHER OF SCIENCE FICTION”

Article · December 2016

CITATIONS

0

READS

2,102

1 author:



Álvaro Marín

Universidad de Cádiz

9 PUBLICATIONS 0 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



English Literature [View project](#)



Scientific Research [View project](#)

Álvaro Marín Castañeda  
Universidad de Cádiz  
alvaro.marincasta@alum.uca.es

14 de diciembre de 2016

# H. G. WELLS: “FATHER OF SCIENCE FICTION”

## ABSTRACT

H. G. Wells is often called “father of science fiction” because of his novels such as *The Time Machine* (1895) or *The War of the Worlds* (1898). Time traveling, go back in time to erase a mistake or go forward in time to know what the future will provide to you are themes that everyone has thought about. H. G. Wells’ novel *The Time Machine* makes a turning point of science fiction and it became a source of inspiration of other writers. Films such as *The Time Machine* (2002), *Back to the Future* (1989) and *Interstellar* (2014) are examples of the diffusion of this topic.

**Keywords:** Time Machine, Time Traveler, Back to the Future, Interstellar, H. G. Wells.

The aim of this essay is to highlight the repercussion of the science fiction genre by H. G. Wells’ novel *The Time Machine*. Besides, we will analyze the novel with its film adaptation —*The Time Machine*— and with two other films: *Interstellar* seen as a scientific adaptation of this genre and *Back to the Future* as a comedy one.

H. G. Wells (21 September 1866 - 13 August 1946), was an English writer that stands out due to his science fiction novels. Therefore, he is frequently called “father of science fiction” and a proof of that could be his novels *The Time Machine* (1895) or *The War of the World* (1898).

*The Time Machine* begins narrating that a scientist and inventor, the Time Traveler, meets with some friends in order to share them with his new invention. He starts explaining them the number of dimensions that exists.

“Now, we’ve all been taught that every object has three dimensions—length, width, and heigh.” ... “What they don’t teach you in school is that everything also has a fourth dimension. And without that fourth dimension, nothing would exist.” ... “It must have length, width, heigh—and it must exist in time. Time is the fourth dimension.” (Wells 3-4).

The debate about the number of dimensions that exist continues nowadays because we only perceive three dimensions: length, width, and heigh. However, we experience another dimension that we are going through: time. Since we were born until the day of our death, we are passing over this dimension. We only can run in one direction through time’s dimension nevertheless we can move in both ways in the other three. This theory of dimensions is explained in *Interstellar*. The main character, Joseph Cooper interpreted by Matthew McConaughey represents the name of H. G. Wells’ Time Traveler. As in the novel, this character will travel to the future and finally he will come back home. In both, at the end of the story, the time traveler will leave again and we will not know what happen to him.

Analyzing *The Time Machine* with its film adaptation we could say that it is a free one. Although the film tries to follow the argument of the novel, it breaks away. At the beginning of the film, the Time Traveler (Alexander Hartdegen) is in love with Emma who died due to a robbery. That is the reason why the Time Traveler invents the Time Machine. After that, he travels to the future, specifically the year 802701 where he finds a world far different from that which he left behind. This travel agrees with what H. G. Wells wrote in his novel. Nevertheless, from this part of the film till the end there are a lot of differences between the novel and the film. In the novel, when the Time Traveler arrives in the future, the world is post-apocalyptic and in the film he lands in the middle of the jungle.

On the one hand, when the Time Traveler meets the Eloi, he describes them such as “childlike face and four feet tall people” (Wells 30) and they do not understand him in the novel, but in the film they said that they have been taught his language so more or less they could communicate with him. When the Time Traveler leaves the time machine he picks up the lever in order to be sure that his invention would not be going anywhere. However, in the film when he gets into the future, he faints and when he is recovered the Eloi guide him to his invention.

On the other hand, the Time Traveler in the novel begins his study about the Eloi community and due to that study, he meets Weena (represented in the film by Mara). She teaches him about Eloi’s customs. When the Time Traveler gets back to the site where he arrived, his machine is missing and dragged by someone into an Egyptian Sphinx. Later, in the dark, he realizes that Eloi are afraid of darkness since at night the Morlocks wander in the upper world. However, in the film the Morlocks do not appear at night as in the novel and in addition the Egyptian Sphinx is represented by an iron skull.

This new species, arouses his curiosity and with Weena’s help he discovers a network of wells that make an underground world where the Morlocks live. In the novel and in its film adaptation Weena is captured by the Morlocks. In the novel the Time Traveler does not try to save her, but in the film he saves her from the Morlocks.

Finally, in the novel the Time Traveler gets back home and he tells his friend the story of his time travel and in a few weeks he decides to travel through time again but he never went back. However, in the film, the Time Traveler decides to stay in the year 802701 because he has fallen in love with Mara.

Therefore, we can be assured that this film adaptation is not faithful to the original text because although it has some similarities with the novel, it breaks away and changes the plot of the story.

Finally, we could establish some connections between *The Time Machine* and *Back to the Future*. Like the other films, *Back to the Future* reflects the theme of traveling through time. Here, Marty McFly travels to the past accidentally and he should find Doc —Dr. Emmet Brown— in order to go back home. Dr. Emmet explains him that any simple change produced in the past will have terrible consequences to the present so he has to arrange the love story of his parents in order not to modify his present. The figure of the time traveler in this film is represented by Marty McFly and by the Dr. Emmett Brown. Both characters travel through time in the film such as the Time Traveler did in H. G. Wells' novel.

Moreover, we could underline another connection between the film and the novel: the time machine. In the novel, H. G. Wells describes the time machine as a vehicle capable to travel through time. It has a rudimentary device where you decide the precise moment you want to travel and to make it work the time traveler needs a lever. Comparing it to the film, the time machine acquires an update vision. As in the novel, the time machine is a vehicle but in the film, we have to consider it literary as a vehicle due to it is a car: a DeLorean DMC-12 and as Wells' time machine works with a lever, *Back to the Future's* time machine works with a flux capacitor.

To conclude this essay, we should highlight the importance of the theme of time traveling introduced by H. G. Wells on his novel *The Time Machine*. Although he was not the first to consider it, he was one of the precursors of the science fiction genre. As we saw before, *Interstellar* represents the scientific application of theories proposed by H. G. Wells on his novel and *Back to The Future* provides a comedy vision of this topic, so we could see through these examples the repercussion of Wells' novel. Who have not thought about traveling through time? Nowadays we could not get the answer to this question, maybe in a near future it will be answered. Meanwhile, we could let our imagination run free recreating H. G. Wells' words.

**Works cited:**

Wells, H. G. *The Time Machine*. Ed. Chris Sasaki. New York: Sterling , 2008.

*Interstellar*. Jonathan Nolan and Christopher Nolan. Dir. Christopher Nolan. Prod. Christopher Nolan. Warner Bros. Pictures, 2014. Blu-Ray.

*Back to the Future*. Bob Gale and Robert Zemeckis. Dir. Robert Zemeckis. Prod. Bob Gale and Neil Canton. Universal Pictures Home Entertainment, 1985. Blu-Ray.

*The Time Machine*. Jonh Logan. Dir. Simon Wells. Prod. Walter F. Parkes and David Valdes. Warner Bros. Pictures and Dreamworks, 2002. Blu-Ray.